



Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee

Minutes

Date: Nov 18th, 2020

Time: 7:15PM

Location: Via Zoom conference

Attendees: *Executive committee:* Christopher Tonkin (chair), Doug Greenfield, Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Adam MacNeill, Doug Mayo-Wells, Scott Smith

Note: Jack Johnson called the meeting to order, Christopher Tonkin joined subsequently.

Town of Arlington: Daniel Amstutz

Members of the public: Linda Epstein, Brendan Mueller

1. Introductions, Ground rules

Meeting opens with review of emergency remote public meeting guidance consistent with Governor Baker's executive order of March 12th, 2020: The Governor's order suspends the requirement of Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a public and accessible location. Public meetings may meet entirely remotely as long as the public can access the meeting.

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/order-suspending-certain-provision-of-open-meeting-law/download>

Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved.

2. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (October 2020)

Johnson: Minutes received, comments made. Any additional comments?

Mayo-Wells: Clarifies that all suggestions from Amstutz were incorporated.

Smith moves to accept December minutes as amended

Kobaslija seconds, Johnson takes a roll call vote

SO VOTED (6-0)

3. Report from COBWEB Officer (Cops on Bicycles with Education for Bicyclists)

No APD Officer present, skipped

4. Special Town Meeting Update; Bikeway Hours Warrant Article

Note: moved ahead in agenda so MacNeill can provide update before leaving for Town Meeting

MacNeill: Not as expected, but not a negative outcome. Article as presented was to give Town Manager authority to reduce curfew hours for the Bikeway. Town Meeting reviewed and removed from consent agenda after discussion on removing all bikeway time of use restrictions. Motion presented to postpone and present substitute motion on 23 November to remove curfew hours from Town bylaws. Seems likely that the substitute motion will pass, but even if it fails the original motion recommended by Select Board seems even more likely to pass.

Johnson: To clarify, bikeway would be open 24/7 under the substitute motion?

MacNeill: That is my understanding, but haven't seen the text of the substitute motion yet.

Johnson: And original motion was for what hours?

MacNeill: Select Board recommendation was slightly different from warrant article mailed to residents; gives the Town Manager authority to set closing hours no earlier than 9pm, but to any later time. Town Manager had indicated intent to ask ABAC for recommendations on expansion of bikeway operating hours.

Amstutz: Clarifies that opening hours would still be 5am. Was anyone from the Arlington Police Department in attendance?

MacNeill: Not sure, usually the Police Chief attends, but hard to tell in a remote meeting. Can confirm that no police officer spoke.

Johnson turns over the agenda to Tonkin.

5. TAC report

(Transportation Advisory Committee)

Smith: TAC met last week.

- Lake Street/Bikeway crossing - New bikeway crossing is waiting for Eversource to turn signal on, some cleanup work continuing. Pedestrian bollard is installed, but the paint is not down yet.

- Lake Street/lane restriping - Bike lane markings are down on Lake Street; sharrows/bike graphics/signage may wait until spring (at end of painting season). The tree overhanging the bikelane at approximately 109 Lake St will be trimmed.

6. Lake Street lane markings

(Covered in item 4)

7. Lake Street/Bikeway intersection

Tonkin: Will send the memo on the need for education about the new signal to Arlington Police Department (APD) and Select Board. Can possibly involve Arlington Community Media Inc. (ACMI) to film an educational spot.

Kobaslija: Test rode new markings from Rt 2 to Mass Ave; felt comfortable, cars were courteous. Noticed new electronic speed limit sign before the bikeway intersection. Does it reflect school hours? Previous school hours sign is hidden by the new sign. Remove old sign?

Amstutz: Confirms it is a programmable sign (was discussed at TAC), should be able to reflect school hours. School zone requires school zone markings on the road surface as well (application of these may be delayed however).

Kobaslija: Why is Lake St speed limit (30mph) higher than general Town 25mph limit?

Smith: Speed study done prior to the Town adopting 25mph limit

Amstutz: Regulatory speeds in Arlington were set in '70s

Tonkin: How to go about changing?

Amstutz: MassDOT has a speed zoning process. Generally hard to change regulatory speeds, based on current traffic speed (85th percentile) as well as other factors. Attended a conference session on this today, MassDOT may be revising the process with support for target speed.

Johnson: When will the new traffic signal be operational?

Smith: DPW waiting for Eversource to hook up, possibly a matter of weeks.

Amstutz: After initial hookup will likely be on flash before getting programmed

8. Update on the Design Review Committee for Mass Ave/Appleton

Epstein: received letter from the Town formally naming me to committee

Nothing additional to report

9. Ghost Bike memorial for Charlie Proctor

Amstutz: Leader Bank declined. Next suggestion by trees east of the intersection on the North side of Mass Ave.

Epstein: 2 benches, tree, nice location.

Amstutz: DPW proposed location by dry cleaners. Town manager asked the Proctor family if they are OK with this location, the Town could move quickly on this if so.

Mayo-Wells: Notes that there is a Proctor memorial fund at MassBike

Epstein: Started in June, family has been involved.

10. New bike parking initiative

Amstutz:

- Reached out to the recreation department, did field work to ID locations at Hill's Hill, ice rink, Magnolia Park. Reviewed suggestions from previous minutes and submitted by Phil Goff.
- General process: ID locations, how many rack spaces fit/are warranted, determine the cost (including concrete slabs, etc.), determine how many can be purchased/installed.
- Considering public survey/poll for public engagement

Greenfield: Whole Foods has inadequate bike parking, is there a way to partner with local businesses

Amstutz: Good idea, need to figure out the right model, need to explore with economic development coordinator and planning department

Tonkin: New guidelines for parking spaces may have impact? Worth raising this with businesses like Whole Foods and Stop & Shop?

Amstutz: Can gauge their interest, can't guarantee the Town can provide racks

Smith: Survey should distinguish between short/long term parking needs (long term needs to be more secure)

Amstutz: Covered parking would take a very large chunk of the budget

Mayo-Wells: To avoid getting infeasible suggestions, maybe use public engagement to prioritize among proposals?

Amstutz: Yes, used that approach with bike share (although that was more constrained)

Johnson: Possible to select locations to combine park and business district support? Eg., Hurd field is right across from Trader Joe's

Epstein: Could funding allocated to connect the bikeway to the reservoir be used for bike racks?

Amstutz: Not sure, need to check with environmental planner Emily Sullivan. The connection will have design requirements, so the design could potentially identify locations for bike parking even if it is funded elsewhere. Not directly involved, but have communicated with Sullivan about bike access between Lowell Street and the bikeway, and designing to avoid biking around the Reservoir (to the detriment of pedestrian traffic).

11. Sustainable Transportation Plan ("Connect Arlington")

Amstutz: Survey on priorities/recommendations is up through 11 December, please take and promote it. Final forum on 14 December, consultants Nelson/Nygard will review results of the survey.

Kobaslija: MacNeill should post on Facebook

Tonkin: Is there a concern that the survey is skewed by the current situation, e.g., people using public transit less due to the pandemic?

Amstutz: Yes, this is a concern. Also related to MBTA proposed service changes, Town has serious concerns about impact and is sending a letter to MBTA. Will cover in detail on that agenda item.

12. Rt 2A repaving in Lincoln, letter of support from ABAC?

Tonkin: Received communication from Bob Wolf (Lincoln Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee) and Mick Beck (Arlington resident) re: trying to include bicycle facilitation in upcoming repaving of Rt 2A (Great Rd) through Lincoln. There are constraints: narrow road, wetlands, historic monuments. Is this too far from Arlington for this committee to support?

Johnson: Good to support from a regional facilitation perspective, and Lexington is adjacent. Road is dangerous for cyclists now, crumbling pavement surface. Widening would help but is constrained by passing through the Minuteman National Historical Park on both sides.

Smith: Would support. Battle Road Trail is not a substitute, not paved, not all-season.

Tonkin: Will draft letter supporting bike facilitation as part of repaving.

13. General updates: BlueBikes, Bikeway Study, Arlington Shared Streets pilot, Bike Friendly Community Application, MBTA proposed service changes

Amstutz:

- BlueBikes - On-street locations (everything but Magnolia Park) will be picked up and stored next week. (Couldn't relocate a station to Town Hall plaza because that work has encountered complications.)
- Bikeway Study - Previously had been in discussions with the Community Preservation Act committee (CPAC). A Town resident (John Ellis) had also submitted a proposal regarding rest stops along the bikeway in East Arlington. CPAC recommended combining these, and approved more total funding than expected, 65K\$ for original study and additional 15K\$ for rest stop proposal, so expecting this total amount (80K\$) once approved by Town Meeting. (The funding is on, but late in, the consent agenda, so Town Meeting has not taken action on it yet.) Will start in January/February (after Connect Arlington plan is wrapped up).
- Shared streets pilot - Mary St materials scheduled to be collected 18 November. Working on a survey for residents in the area about the pilot, figuring out distribution. Will summarize observations in a report for the Select Board. Have received some from APD, indicating fewer speed violations and fewer vehicles overall.
- Bike Friendly Community application - revised deadline is February, working on application, will reach out to ABAC with specific questions.

Tonkin: Phil Goff may be able to help

Amstutz: MBTA proposed service changes, not directly bike-related:

- "Forging Ahead" initiative, due to COVID collecting fewer fares (~25% trips/day vs. 2019/2020) but operating essentially the same services.
- Proposing many service cuts, eliminating and consolidating routes.
- Several would be bad for Arlington, e.g., combining routes 62 and 76, 78 and 84, eliminating 79 (and 80, contingent on completion of Green Line extension), and could potentially reduce frequency on other routes including 77, 87, 95, and 350.
- Encourage sending comment via website <https://www.mbta.com/forging-ahead>, had a public meeting last week (Scott Smith attended), accepting public comments until 4 December; Fiscal Management and Control Board is planning to make final decision on cuts on 9 December.
- Town is working on a letter to MBTA to identify the most critical services. Without additional State or Federal relief MBTA will be unable to avoid service cuts.
- Some changes would start early in 2021. Not just bus but entire system; suspending all ferry service, eliminating weekend service on commuter rail

Smith:

- Series of public meetings, this was focused on "Region 2" (Minuteman bikeway corridor + Belmont, Medford). Approximately 140 participants. Presentation was not super specific, in addition to what Dan mentioned considering dropping 351 express service from Alewife to Burlington and possibly extending 350 to cover some of the north service region. (Some changes have already happened.)

- One bike specific impact, based on ridership numbers, MBTA should drop the rush-hour prohibition of bikes on the Red Line, I encourage others to comment on this point. (MBTA has already dropped the rush-hour prohibition of bikes on commuter rail).

Amstutz:

- Cuts not expected to be permanent, but will take time to bring back services post-pandemic, so a long term concern for transportation plan, Net Zero greenhouse gas plan, attempts to reduce single occupancy vehicle use, address congestion, etc.

Smith: 2 other points raised in public comment:

- Concern about losing MBTA subsidy for community bus services e.g., in Lexington
- Concern from businesses, hospitals, about impact on employees.

Mayo-Wells: Did anyone raise that low ridership is significant for the safety of public transit services during the pandemic?

Smith: Not specifically, did mention that loading standards for busses are lower, and presented graphs of ridership numbers at different times of day. Not looking to make service crowded; drop in service will be somewhat less than drop in ridership.

Amstutz: Would shift some service to routes that are still busy, e.g., 111 for Chelsea to Boston commuters.

Smith: Map on site summarizes plan

Amstutz: Finalizing letter, may share. Town Manager is also reaching out to State legislators.

Tonkin: Many people rely on the bus, don't have other viable options.

14. Next ABAC meetings

Tonkin: Need to fix date, rooms for 2021?

Amstutz: Yes, need to fix meetings for calendar and to lock in the public meeting account. No in-person meetings until spring at the earliest, so can't book rooms. Can keep on 3rd Wednesday of the month, and double-check that nothing conflicts with holidays, etc.

15. Any other business?

Johnson: We have a new attendee, Brandon Mueller, would you like to introduce yourself, mention any issues you would like the committee to be aware of, or impressions of this meeting?

Mueller: New Arlington resident in the Heights, but have biked through Arlington for a long time Massachusetts resident for 6 years, used to work in Lexington, so familiar with concerns about 2A. Currently (apart from pandemic) and commuting to Cambridge via Massachusetts

Avenue/Beacon Street, like the new separated line on Beacon St. Have a lot of ideas, but not sure what is feasible. Interested in helping riders who are less confident.

Tonkin: Will add you to e-mail list and share info (meeting agendas, bike facilitation news in region, e.g., new separated lane on Webster Ave.) Also, comments are always welcome in the meetings.

Tonkin: 19 November is Lorenz Finison's Bicycle Revolution talk. Also also Lauren Hefferon's Ciclismo bike travel film festival - Regent's theater:

http://regenttheatre.com/details/11th_annual_ciclismo_classico_bike_travel_film_festival

Tonkin: Re-instituting tri-town meeting, raised with Bedford and Lexington, heard back from Bedford, who are also in contact with a (new) Concord bike committee. May aim for a weekday in January. Need to post an agenda. Lots to discuss: COVID response, bike crashes, new bike lanes, etc. Participation from Western suburbs to cover 2A plans would also be welcome.

Amstutz: Town Zoom accounts should be available for this sort of use.

Kobaslija: If meeting is virtual, fewer restrictions on room size, possible to include other neighboring communities like Cambridge, Somerville?

Johnson: Arlington has hosted more regional biking focused meetings in the past, not just the Minuteman towns. Including Winchester, Cambridge, Somerville, etc. These were productive meetings. Could do these virtually.

Tonkin: Maybe hold a Tri-town/West meeting first, then put together an agenda for a broader regionally focused meeting?

Amstutz: Should committee meetings have a standing agenda to cover regional bike-related things happening in Somerville, Cambridge, Belmont, etc.? Maybe designate points of contact?

Tonkin: Somerville used to have monthly bike talks to share information.

Epstein: These are ongoing, Ken Carlson had a virtual Somerville meeting last week.

Smith: Moves to Adjourn

Greenfield: Seconds

Adjourned